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- *The difference between soul and spirit*
- *The evolution of Jesus*
- *Human potential compared to fire*

God provides your lives with warmth and light, just as the fire [in the fireplace] provides such comfort. The fire represents potential as heat and light, as the conversion of energy, conversion of processes—chemical and otherwise. It is easy to experience the light of the fire, but it is something else entirely to understand what is happening as you experience it visually.

God's presence, the infinite reality of life, spiritual life, is far more involved than the mere acknowledgment of God's great presence. There are many who make such acknowledgment and claim in that acknowledgment an understanding of what God is, what the power of God can be, what its potential is. But such rantings, such claims of complete insight, such assertions of great certainty on the nature of God, do not change the fact that the power of the reality of God carries with it potentials that go beyond your possible comprehension.

We, your guides who are so intimately joined with each of you, are able to provide some insight. It is merely superficial in comparison with the depth of such spiritual presence. But it is our loving responsibility and pleasure always to share with you a view that goes always deeper into the reality of God and into the reality of what comprises human life in its most essential manner.

You are blessed of course with human life, but you are also blessed with spiritual life. You wonder about the difference between the soul and the spirit. The soul for each of you is not actually different from one another in any substantive way, but each of your souls does have characteristics which in themselves are identifiable. Your souls are part of an entity of souls that we could refer to as Spirit with a capital S. The Spirit is the collection of all souls. It is the great unity, the profound oneness that you all share in common.

Recognizing that common shared spirituality and recognizing that no soul is totally separate, it is helpful to acknowledge that the soul that is associated with each human being has characteristics that identify it outside of the existence of other souls, and yet each soul is connected to another. You may have water with red dye that is poured into water with green dye. The redness and the greenness do not disappear but they are integrally a part of a greater whole. Your souls therefore are much like the water with red dye or green dye. Both are comprised of water. Both mix in ways that cannot be separated. But both have their own colors which merge into a greater unity.

Your souls have different needs but have different strengths. This is a part of their individual characteristics. They learn, they grow, they evolve as a result of your human lives. You contribute importantly to the growth of your individual souls. The

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development of each human's soul is always in the direction toward wholeness of Spirit with a capital S. Each soul can be identified as having spirit within, spirit with a small s. The spirit can be observed as a manifestation of the soul within the human life form. Labels ultimately are useless. What is important is the concept that you each contain a soul whose particular characteristics may be unique and yet are in no way separated from the collection of all souls. Your lives are therefore characterized by the growth of your soul. Your interaction with others is affected by that growth. Some souls have experienced numerous human lives; others, only a few. But each soul, as you know, grows and develops according to its own pace and according to the experiences that are gained sharing with human life.

You wonder about the evolution of Jesus whom you call the Christ. We can assure you that there have been many such individuals whose lives reflect a perception of God centered upon unconditional love. That is the crucial element. Compassion, forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, sacrifice—all of those characteristics that you assume to be godly only exist because of their life within an environment of unconditional love. It is not logical for anyone to believe that only one individual has lived a human life and has devoted his or her adult years to unconditional love. Nevertheless, the question arises: What enables an individual to live a life of unconditional love? What happens to such an individual? What happened to Jesus? Why was there such apparent change?

We come back to the fire, the fire that consumes and transforms and gives heat and light, the fire of potential. Every human who has ever lived is born with potential. The smallest flame shares the same potential as the greatest fire. They are the same. They both consume, they both transform, they both create heat, they both create light. And so it is with all human beings. You are born with a flame within. And as you grow and develop, that flame may become stronger. The flame becomes greater when it is nourished, when there is fuel, when there is oxygen. The flame of the spirit also needs nourishment, needs fuel. In some environments that nourishment, that fuel, is present in large quantities, and a small flicker becomes a great fire. In other environments the flicker remains reduced in intensity while retaining the same potential.

In the case of Jesus, the flame from within was accompanied by an environment that allowed that flame to become greater, to become all-consuming in its ability to demonstrate unconditional love. What was this fuel? Was it an individual or a few individuals? What was the cause?

The youth of Jesus was no different than the youth of all people. Jesus was not an entirely different individual as an adult than as a child, just as you are not entirely different from that being whose body you occupied when very young. But each of you has changed because of your life experiences—people that you've met, things you've observed, things you have read, thoughts you have entertained. And so it was with Jesus. Jesus encountered leaders of the community. He came in contact with leaders

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outside the community through travels. He read, he thought, he evaluated, he questioned. A scientist takes what is seen and asks “why” and “how” in a more profound manner than many others. Jesus also asked “how” and “why.” How did the laws become laws? Why did they become laws? And by examining the “how” and the “why,” just as the scientist does, the perception of Jesus’ world changed.

We spoke the last time about the fact that reality does not change. It is your perception that changes. And it was precisely the perception of Jesus that changed so strongly. Each of you is governed by your own perceptions. Jesus was governed by his own perceptions. The potential for that perception was there all the time. The commitment was unusually intense, and from that commitment to understanding evolved insights, many which provided meaning for those whose perceptions were not as clear.

You are correct in believing that each of you shares the same potential that Jesus had. There is no difference. What is of course different is your commitment to that perception. Life for you is much different than life 2000 years ago. There is much that demands your commitment. When there is such chatter, it is even more difficult to listen, to hear. You are so anxious to please, you are so anxious to achieve certain objectives, you are so anxious to respond, you are so anxious to learn, you are so anxious to *do* that you have less opportunity to *be*.

The secret to perception that alters life permanently is not really a secret. It is a commitment to *be*. If you wish your lives to take on different characteristics than they demonstrate, then commit yourself to *being* rather than *doing*. Society only recognizes *doing*. When you are not *doing*, then you seem aimless, without purpose, without function.

You must be willing to accept the validity and importance of *being* and then live a committed life to *being*. This does not mean you have no objectives, this does not mean you have no opinions. A life of *being* is not a life without purpose. It is not an aimless life, it is not a passive life. *Being* means being open—being open to others, being open to new ideas, being open to what it means to be unconditionally loving. *Being* allows you to choose a commitment to unconditional love. That means being willing to discard what you feel removes you from what leads to unconditional love. A commitment to unconditional love is a decision, but more importantly it is a process.

We can say to you with absolute assurance that in your human lives you will never become totally unconditionally loving. We can tell you that you can become oriented, motivated, grounded by the importance of unconditional love. A commitment to the importance of this is a vital step toward becoming unconditionally loving.

Jesus taught unconditional love, but Jesus was also human. Jesus expressed impatience. He expressed anger. He expressed disagreements. You can also do the same and be unconditionally loving in your intent because unconditionally loving accepts the value, the worthiness, the importance of all human beings, and it means an

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acknowledgment of the equality of all human beings. You can be angry with one's behavior and yet love them deeply. You can be angry at something your child may do or say and yet love them intensely. You can be angry at something your spouse may say or do or believe and yet love your spouse as an equally sacred being to you.

Unconditional love does not mean a lack of tension or a lack of disagreement or a lack of conflict. You can be in conflict with one whom you love dearly because you are recognizing the importance, the validity, the equality of that other individual. You never bring into question that characteristic of another human being. All you are doing is disagreeing with a manifestation of that individual. You are not denigrating that person's humanness, sacredness, spiritual-ness, godliness.

Jesus expressed anger. He lived a life committed to his perception of God. Imagine your life if you were allowing yourself to be governed solely by your perception of God. Whatever you saw, you saw God first. In every individual you saw, you saw God. This is the great magnificence of Jesus. In his adult life he was committed to unconditional love because his perception of God was a God of unconditional love, and seeing God first as unconditionally loving meant that he related to all with unconditional love.

Commit yourselves to a view of God as you understand God to be. Each individual will have a slightly different experience of who God is, and therefore that commitment will be slightly different. But your view of God changes as you develop, as you grow, as you learn, as you experience. You must be open to changes in your perception of God, and when you commit yourself to such perception, particularly unconditional love as you learn to understand it, your relationship with all others will be transformed and glorified.

You should rejoice in your ability to be transforming, in your ability to create light, in your ability to create heat. Become the great fire. Find ways of nurturing the flickering flame so that that power of light and warmth can be in your lives all-consuming.

Your lives are blessed by that fire as iron is blessed and strengthened and transformed in the refiner's fire. Be warmed by its presence, be guided by its light, and rejoice in your transformation!

Amen.